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EARLY EFFORT

FOR

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

BY

BENJAMIN BRAWLEY

Author of "A Social History of the American Negro"

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NOTE

The present paper endeavors simply to call to mind one of the half-forgotten chapters in the history of the education of the Negro, and to show that even before the Civil War there was emphasis on industrial training. Seldom does it make any distinction between industrial and vocational education, these terms by popular usage being very nearly synonymous. It is not the plan of the series to emphasize footnotes, and any necessary reference is given in connection with the text. Important as sources are the records of the American Convention of Abolition Societies, the Minutes and Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the people of Color, Philadelphia, 1831; Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People and their Friends, Troy, 1847; Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, Rochester, 1853, and other such documents. A brief sketch of the Peterboro Manual Labor School is accessible in the African Repository, X, 312-313, and the editorial from Frederick Douglass' Paper entitled "Learn Trades or Starve" may be found in the same series, XXIX, 136-138. Martin R. Delany's The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered, Philadelphia, 1852; Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, written by Himself, Hartford, 1882; and James Pyle Wickersham's A History of Education in Pennsylvania, Lancaster, 1886, are valuable for the purpose, while of more recent studies, the opening pages of Dr. W. E. B. DuBois's The Negro Artisan, Atlanta, 1902 (No. 7 of Atlanta University Publications), are suggestive, and Dr. Carter G. Woodson's The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, New York, 1915, gives the subject special consideration.

EARLY EFFORT FOR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

Let our young men and young women prepare themselves for usefulness and business; that the men may enter into merchandise, trading, and other things of importance; the young women may become teachers of various kinds, and otherwise fill places of usefulness. Parents must turn their attention more to the education of their children. We mean, to educate them for useful practical business purposes. Educate them for the store and counting-house—to do everyday practical business. Consult the children's propensities, and direct their education according to their inclinations. It may be that there is too great a desire on the part of parents to give their children a professional education, before the body of the people are ready for it. A people must be a business people and have more to depend upon than mere help in people's houses and hotels, before they are either able to support or capable of properly appreciating the services of professional men among them. This has been one of our great mistakes—we have gone in advance of ourselves. We have commenced at the superstructure of the building, instead of the foundation—at the top instead of the bottom. We should first be mechanics and common tradesmen, and professions as a matter of course would grow out of the wealth made thereby.

These words, that sound as if they were taken from one of the speeches of Booker T. Washington, were not indeed uttered by the distinguished leader of Tukegee. They are from a book published in 1852, the year of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and they were by Martin R. Delany, one of the representative men of the Negro people in the middle of the last century, who was writing several years before Mr. Washington was born.

Effort before 1820.

It is not, however, in the agitation just before the Civil War that we find the beginning of the idea of industrial education for the Negro. For the ultimate origin we have to go back even to the years before the Revolution, and to the laws governing apprenticeship in the colonies. In 1727, for instance, in Virginia, it was ordered that David James, a free Negro boy, should be bound to one James Isdel, who was to "teach him to read the Bible distinctly, also the trade of a gunsmith." Education in these early years, however, was largely in the hands of the English Church, which

naturally was primarily concerned with religious instruction; and such a case as that just cited had only slight bearing on the later idea of industrial training.

Even at this time the destitute condition of many free Negroes, and their difficulty in adjusting themselves to the situation in which they were placed, excited the solicitude of those persons who were disposed to be friendly; and George Whitefield in 1740 thought of an institution for those in Pennsylvania. A generation later the active mind of Thomas Jefferson debated this as many other problems, and in the hands of this patriot as executor Thaddeus Kosciuszko left considerable property for the improvement of those whose unfortunate situation had touched his heart, the same to be of service "in giving them an education in trades or otherwise." In this, however, as in so many other matters that have affected the welfare of humanity, it remained for the Quakers to take the most definite steps forward. After 1770 the Friends were systematic in their efforts for the education of the Negro. By 1773 they had in Philadelphia a brick schoolhouse for the purpose, and in the course of their training they placed emphasis on sewing and other simple arts. By 1782 the philanthropist, Anthony Benezet, who had long been interested in education and social betterment, was formally in charge of the school, and at his death he left a fortune "to hire and employ a religious-minded person or persons, to teach a number of Negro, mulatto, or Indian children, to read, write, arithmetic, plain accounts, needle work, etc." By this time, however, under the influence of the humanitarian impulses of the Revolutionary era, the state Abolition Societies had come into being, and the delegates from nine such organizations formed on January 1, 1794, the American Convention of Abolition Societies. The different branches were interested not only in emancipation; each also reported from time to time on the property and employment as well as the conduct of the freedmen in its province. The Convention also prepared addresses to "the Free Africans and other Free People of Color in the United States." Typical was that of 1796, which advised among other things as follows:

Teach your children useful trades, or to labor with their hands in cultivating the earth. These employments are favorable to health and virtue. In the choice of masters, who are to instruct them in the above branches of business, prefer those who will work with them; by this means they will acquire habits of industry, and be better preserved from vice than if they worked alone, or under the eye of persons less interested in their welfare.

Economic Situation.

The solicitude that was beginning to be manifested for the highest social welfare of the Negro was largely in response to an economic situation that was rapidly developing in the country. As far back as 1708 white mechanics in Pennsylvania had protested against the hiring out of Negro mechanics, and in 1722 there had been further protest. In the early years of the nineteenth century the tendency towards restriction was even more pronounced. It was increasingly becoming evident that in the history of the Negro in America slavery was only an incident—a very grave and important incident, but still an incident—and that the final question was that of his actual place in the body politic. Here was a problem that in the untimate analysis reached far beyond an artificial system of bondage. In Ohio about 1820 Mechanics' Societies combined against Negroes, and a master mechanic was publicly tried for assisting a young Negro to learn a trade. When moreover a Negro cabinet-maker purchased his freedom in Kentucky and went to Cincinnati, he found great difficulty in getting employment. An Englishman finally gave him work, but the other employees struck. Such was the situation that the Negro had to face throughout the North and the growing Central West. Individuals of unusual ambition and energy sometimes found a way out in spite of the handicap, but the actual condition of many of the freedmen left much to be desired. In nothing was the idealism of the Abolitionists more manifest than this, that in the face of the unusually difficult situation they still insisted on fundamental principles. Those who were most actively interested in the welfare of the Negro also had the good sense to see that many of the freedmen were quite untrained for any place in a fast growing industrial community.

In the South labor was almost wholly in the hands of slaves, though in some of the older and larger cities the F. M. C.'s (Free Men of Color) prospered, and individual masons or carpenters were sometimes very efficient. A great plantation moreover had men working in several different trades. In course of time, however, this section faced a great dilemma. Slave labor and skilled labor were essentially contradictory terms. A man could go only a little way in intelligence and skill without desiring to be his own master. Men could hardly be increasingly efficient and at the same time satisfied in a state of bondage. After 1831 acts against the education of the Negro became more repressive. Thus Georgia in 1833 enacted that no one should permit a Negro to transact business for him in writing, and in 1845 said that slaves and free Negroes could not take contracts to build or repair houses.

Negro Advance and Opinion.

To the difficulty that the Negro mechanic faced, especially in the North, was now added another force that did not tend to emphasize industrial training or achievement, and this was found in the Negro's own ambition for higher things. About 1840 there was still question as to the intellectual capacity of the Negro student, and this doubt became a challenge to earnest young men to measure themselves by the highest possible standards. These standards were those of the classical college. It was a day when the dignity of labor was not yet fully realized, and when modern methods of scientific agriculture had yet a long way to go. While then there was as yet only the beginning of such a racial consciousness as meant emphasis on Negro enterprise, there was growing up a small but important group of educated men who often found it difficult or even impossible to find positions at once congenial and financially profitable. Some of these men were trained for service in Liberia. Others who may not have contemplated such service also felt that their best opportunity was in the new country in the ancient fatherland. Thus early were there the opposing ideals of industrial and liberal education, and the conflict was

only less strong than that sixty years later. Not every one could see that the Negro people, like any other people, needed both kinds of training, and those who advocated training for different industrial fields had an uphill fight. There was yet another matter. Even then earnest and patriotic Negro men were divided on the great question of emphasizing racial ideals or of losing racial consciousness in the larger life of the nation. *The National Anti-Slavery Standard* said: "We oppose all exclusive action on the part of the colored people, except where the clearest necessity demands it;" and Frederick Douglass, who so ardently favored industrial training, was one of those who advocated the national rather than the racial ideal. It is accordingly not to be wondered at that in all the currents and counter-currents of the day even honest men were sometimes uncertain as to the best course to pursue. The hard facts of the economic situation forced attention, however, and in the whole generation just before the Civil War there was effort for training in the trades as well as endeavor for advancement in more liberal or classical culture.

Proposed Manual Labor College.

Effort began to be definite in the formal convention of Negro men assembled in Philadelphia in June, 1831. To this came delegates from five states. In the course of its sessions the convention was visited by Benjamin Lundy, of Washington, William Lloyd Garrison, of Boston, Arthur Tappan, of New York, Thomas Shipley and Charles Pierce, of Philadelphia, and Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, of New Haven. Jocelyn, Tappan, and Garrison addressed the convention with reference to a proposed college in New Haven, toward the $20,000 expense of which one individual (Tappan himself) had subscribed $1,000, with the understanding that the remaining $19,000 be raised within a year. A committee on the same said in its report

> That a plan had been submitted to them by the above-named gentlemen, for the liberal education of Young Men of Color, on the Manual-Labor system, all of which they respectfully submit to the consideration of the Convention . . . The plan proposed is, that a College be established at New Haven, Conn., as

soon as $20,000 are obtained, and to be on the Manual-Labor system, by which, in connection with a scientific education, they may also obtain a useful Mechanical or Agricultural profession.

The report was unanimously adopted. In favor of New Haven as the place of location seven reasons were given, as follows: The site was healthy and beautiful; the inhabitants were friendly, pious, generous, and humane; the laws were salutary and protecting to all, without regard to complexion; boarding was cheap and provisions were good; the situation was as central as any other that could be obtained with the same advantages; the town of New Haven carried on an extensive West India trade, and many of the wealthy colored residents in the Islands would, no doubt, send their sons there to be educated, thus forming a fresh tie of friendship, which would be productive of much good in the end; and finally, the literary and scientific character of New Haven rendered it a desirable place for the location of the college.

As to all of this the advocates of the plan were soon undeceived. The inhabitants of New Haven may have been pious, but they were certainly not generous or friendly. The citizens at a public meeting declared themselves as absolutely opposed to the project and forced it to be abandoned. After a year or two some effort was made to transfer the money on hand to an academy built by subscription in Canaan, N. H., in 1834, but at this place the townspeople demolished the edifice that was erected. In the conventions of Negro men, however, the idea persistently obtained, and at the Troy meeting in 1847 the Committee on Education, composed of Alexander Crummell, James McCune Smith, and P. G. Smith, reported in favor of "a collegiate institution, on the manual labor plan," and a committee of twenty-five was appointed to carry the idea into effect. Again in 1853, at Rochester, there was renewed interest in an industrial college; steps were taken for the registry of Negro mechanics and artisans who were in search of employment, and of the names of persons who were willing to give them work; and there was also a committee on historical records and statistics that was not only to compile studies in Negro biography but also

reply to attacks on the race. Too much emphasis can not be placed upon the fact that Frederick Douglass, James W. C. Pennington, James McCune Smith, Alexander Crummell, Martin R. Delany, William C. Nell, and other representative men of this period were by no means impractical theorists but men who were scientifically approaching the problem of their people and who debated intelligently practically every great question that faces the race to-day. They not only anticipated the ideas of industrial education and of the National Urban League of the present day, but they also endeavored to lay firmly the foundations of racial self-respect. Of them all, in connection with the present subject, Frederick Douglass calls for very special mention.

Frederick Douglass.

A few months after the appearance of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and while that book was still enjoying its first great success, Frederick Douglass was invited by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe to confer with her about a plan which she was considering for the advancement of the free colored people of the country. She was just about to go to England, she said, and expected to have some money placed in her hands. This she thought to use in erecting a monument to "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and she was wondering whether the best thing would be an educational institution pure and simple or a school more specifically industrial. Douglass expressed himself as opposed to an industrial school that was merely theoretical and as desiring actual workshops. The colored people, he said, needed money; they were shut out from all workshops and were only barbers, waiters, and coachmen. They "needed more to learn how to make a good living than to learn Latin and Greek." Mrs. Stowe approved this idea and asked Douglass for a formal letter that she might use as occasion demanded. This Douglass wrote from Rochester under date March 8, 1853. After discussing the general difficulties of the situation, and how it was that some representative men had been forced to leave the country, he passed to concrete suggestion; and his statement is so clear and strong that we give it at length in his own words:

The plan which I humbly submit is the establishment in Rochester, N. Y., or in some other part of the United States equally favorable to such an enterprise, of an Industrial College in which shall be taught several important branches of the mechanic arts. This college to be open to colored youth. I will pass over the details of such an institution as I propose. Never having had a day's schooling in all my life I may not be expected to map out the details of a plan so comprehensive as that involved in the idea of a college. I repeat, then, I leave the organization and administration to the superior wisdom of yourself and the friends who second your noble efforts. The argument in favor of an Industrial College (a college to be conducted by the best men, and the best workmen which the mechanic arts can afford; a college where colored youth can be instructed to use their hands, as well as their heads; where they can be put in possession of the means of getting a living whether their lot in after life may be cast among civilized or uncivilized men; whether they choose to stay here, or prefer to return to the land of their fathers) is briefly this: Prejudice against the free colored people in the United States has shown itself nowhere so invincible as among mechanics. The farmer and the professional man cherish no feeling so bitter as that cherished by these. The latter would starve us out of the country entirely. At this moment I can more easily get my son into a lawyer's office to study law than I can into a blacksmith's shop to blow the bellows and to wield the sledge-hammer. Denied the means of learning useful trades we are pressed into the narrowest limits to obtain a livelihood. In times past we have been the hewers of wood and drawers of water for American society, and we once enjoyed a monopoly in menial employments, but this is so no longer. Even these employments are rapidly passing away out of our hands. The fact is (every day begins with the lesson, and ends with the lesson) that colored men must learn trades; must find new employments; new modes of usefulness to society, or that they must decay under the pressing want to which their condition is rapidly bringing them.

We must become mechanics; we must build as well as live in houses; we must make as well as use furniture; we must construct bridges as well as pass over them, before we can properly live or be respected by our fellowmen. We need mechanics as well as ministers. We need workers in iron, clay, and leather. We have orators, authors, and other professional men, but these reach only a certain class, and get respect for our race in certain select circles. To live here as we ought we must fasten ourselves to our countrymen through their every day cardinal wants. We must not only be able to *black* boots, but to *make* them. At present we are unknown in the northern states as mechanics. We

give no proof of genius or skill at the county, state, or national fairs. We are unknown at any of the great exhibitions of the industry of our fellowcitizens, and being unknown we are unconsidered.

Douglass communicated his views to other representative men, especially at the convention in Rochester, 1853, which he termed "the largest and most enlightened colored convention that, up to that time, had ever assembled in this country." The plan of Mrs. Stowe, however, had unfortunate development. While in England this writer was criticised for raising money, and when she returned she announced that she had given up the idea of a school. Douglass himself could not see the reason for this and not unnaturally felt that in the whole matter he had been placed in an "awkward position." He never ceased to feel the need for vocational training, however, and one of the most characteristic of his utterances that have come down to us was the editorial in his own paper entitled "Learn Trades or Starve," in which he said: "The American Colonization Society tells you to go to Liberia. Mr. Bibb tells you to go to Canada. Others tell you to go to school. We tell you to go to work; and to work you must go or die. Men are not valued in this country, or in any country, for what they *are;* they are valued for what they can *do.*"

Peterboro Manual Labor School.

While in conventions and elsewhere manual labor training for Negro young men and women was being discussed, there were at least a few attempts to give concrete expression to the idea. One of the most interesting of these was the "Manual Labor School for Young Men of Color" started in Peterboro, Madison County, N. Y., in May, 1834. This was simply a part of the general plan of Gerrit Smith for the amelioration of the condition of free Negroes in the North. This remarkable man, whose interests ranged all the way from theology and temperance to politics and railroads, and whose great wealth was most generously distributed, had in mind an institution for which he laid down regulations that interestingly anticipate those of institutions of a later day. The school was open to young men from

fourteen to twenty-five years of age, and each was informed before he came that he would need a supply of "good coarse clothing" for a year or two, and five or ten dollars above the expenses of his journey. The students were supplied with books and board, and living was very plain. Every boy was required to work four hours a day, and it was estimated that this student labor was worth slightly more than three cents an hour, or twelve and a half cents for the four hours. Neither tea nor coffee was used, and the students slept on straw mattresses. They did their own cooking and washing under the supervision of a capable woman of the race, one who had "lived a great many years in the family of the late Governor Trumbull." Such service counted on the required work. Each student promised to abstain from intoxicants, including cider and strong beer, and tobacco in every form. There was a reading table well supplied with abolition and colonization literature, and when a young man left the institution he was free to go wherever seemed best. Such was the plan. Just how well it was carried out it is difficult to say. The matter is practically unmentioned in the biography of Smith (that by Frothingham). At the beginning, we may observe, there was provision for eighteen young men; within two months seven were in attendance, and it was expected that the place would soon be full.

Other Institutions.

Other schools were started with similar purpose; but it is to be remembered that even in institutions that offered some simple industries, vocational training was not always the prime object. Sometimes Negro students were admitted to white institutions, and there was also a vanishing line between the industrial school and the one for orphan children that required several hours of work. In 1842 those Negroes who had made their way to Canada called a convention to advise as to the expenditure of $1,500 that had been given for their welfare. It was decided to found a grammar school but one "where the boys could be taught the practice of some mechanic art, and the girls could be instructed in those domestic arts which are the proper occupation and ornament of their sex."

Thus was organized the British and American Manual Labor Institute of the Colored Settlements in Upper Canada. In this enterprise the leading spirits were Rev. Hiram Wilson and Josiah Henson, the famous prototype of Uncle Tom; and for about fifteen years the school thus founded did much to cultivate self-reliance on the part of those who attended.

We return to the efforts of the Quakers in Pennsylvania. In 1832 Richard Humphreys left $10,000 to establish a school for instructing "descendants of the African race in school learning in the various branches of the mechanical arts and trades and agriculture." In 1839 the Society of Friends formed an association to carry out this provision, and it was felt that the best way to be of service to the Negroes was "to extend to them the benefits of a good education, and to instruct them in the knowledge of some useful trade or business, whereby they may be enabled to obtain a comfortable livelihood by their own industry." They bought a piece of land in Philadelphia County and began instruction in farming and shoemaking. The industrial effort was not very successful, however, and seven years afterwards the trustees sold the farm, and the school developed into the later well known Institute for Colored Youth.

In the meantime Augustus Wattles, who had been interested in the education of the freedmen in Ohio, met in Philadelphia the trustees of the fund of Samuel Emlen, of New Jersey, who in his will had set aside $20,000 "for the support and education in school learning and mechanic arts and agriculture of boys of African and Indian descent whose parents would give them to the Institute." Emlen Institute became one of those schools or homes that more and more emphasized the care and training of orphans. Beginning in Ohio in 1843, it was removed to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 1858, removed again in 1873 to a site not far away, and in 1878 had sixteen boys in attendance.

Thus, although institutions did not always develop as it was intended that they should, even a generation before the Civil War there were concrete and clearly defined plans for the industrial training of Negro young people in the United States.

Such efforts as these give only a faint idea of the interest that there was in the subject of industrial or vocational training in the years before the Civil War. In the course of the great struggle itself came the rapid growth of schools for the freedmen throughout the South, and in a few years the great development of Hampton Institute under General Armstrong. Several years were yet to pass, however, before the idea of industrial training was to take firm hold of the popular mind. In 1882 was established the Slater Fund, whose "singularly wise administration" was some years ago remarked by Dr. DuBois as "perhaps the greatest single impulse toward the economic emancipation of the Negro." In 1884 Henry Edwards Brown, secretary of the International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association, circulated an interesting letter that looked toward the founding of an industrial school for Negro young men and women in the far South. It was not then realized that the institution was already in existence; but of course Tuskegee in 1884 was by no means the place that it became after Mr. Washington's epoch-making speech in 1895.

From Promise to Fulfilment.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS PUBLISHED BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE JOHN F. SLATER FUND.

1. Documents Relating to the Origin and Work of the Slater Trustees, 1894.
2. A Brief Memoir of the Life of John F. Slater, by Rev. S. H. Howe, D. D., 1894.
3. Education of the Negroes Since 1860, by J. L. M., Curry, LL. D., 1894.
4. Statistics of the Negroes in the United States, by Henry Gannett, of the United States Geological Survey, 1894.
5. Difficulties, Complications, and Limitations Connected with the Education of the Negro, by J. L. M. Curry, LL. D., 1895.
6. Occupations of the Negroes, by Henry Gannett, of the United States Geological Survey, 1895.
7. The Negroes and the Atlanta Exposition, by Alice M. Bacon, of the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, Virginia, 1896.
8. Report of the Fifth Tuskegee Negro Conference, by John Quincy Johnson, 1896.
9. A Report Concerning the Colored Women of the South, by Mrs. E. C. Hobson and Mrs. C. E. Hopkins, 1896.
10. A Study in Black and White, by Daniel C. Gilman, 1897.
11. The South and the Negro, by Bishop Charles B. Galloway, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1904.
12. Report of the Society of the Southern Industrial Classes, Norfolk, Va., 1907.
13. Report on Negro Universities in the South, by W. T. B. Williams, 1913.
14. County Teacher Training Schools for Negroes, 1913.
15. Duplication of Schools for Negro Youths, by W. T. B. Williams, 1914.
16. Sketch of Bishop Atticus G. Haygood, by Rev. G. B. Winton, D. D., 1915.
17. Memorial Addresses in Honor of Dr. Booker T. Washington, 1916.
18. Suggested Course for County Training Schools, 1917.
19. Southern Women and Racial Adjustment, by L. H. Hammond, 1917; 2nd ed., 1920.
20. Reference List of Southern Colored Schools, 1918; 2nd ed., 1921.
21. Report on Negro Universities and Colleges, by W. T. B. Williams, 1922.
22. Early Effort for Industrial Education, by Benjamin Brawley, 1923.